

Master's Choice

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Summary: A young initiate faces trials and dangers, while yearning to be a padawan. First in a series.

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> <meta name="Generator"> This story and all others under my name take place few centuries before starwars: A new Hope

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Keep in mind that teachings in this time frame are different from that of Tales of the Jedi and The Phantom Menace, I chose to write about an era that no one has explored before.

In a Jedi Temple, in the lower reaches of the deep Voshir Forest, a young Jedi student faces trials and danger while yearning to become a Padawan...

STARWARS

Master's choice

Written by Ceri Peters

The adventures of Drayn Hywel & Ceila Rism

"Get 'I'm, get 'I'm!" Drayn looked behind his shoulder and saw the

others running after him, his heart pounded in his chest and a lump rose in his throat.

Putting his worries behind him, he looked in front of him once again and ran faster, almost tripping over a log of wood, which was in his path. He ran with a speed, which beguiled his eleven-year-old frame, running a hand through his sweaty brown hair he dodged a tree branch and held the object in his arms tighter.

It was round and made of d'gal leather, a local product, one which was the main export on the planet Voshir.

Usually Drayn enjoyed the large, deep forests of Voshir but now, he cursed them. Trees, puddles and rocks were in his way, and insects annoyed him.

Looking behind his shoulder once again, Drayn cursed as he saw another Jedi student, Feira, Force jump to a ledge above and shorten the distance between them.

He heard the others, screaming various obscenities and yelling at each other to hurry up. He heard a curse and a crack, imagining that one of them must have fallen down.

His legs hurt, he tried to shunt the pain and used the Force to cleanse himself, like his teachers taught him. He felt his muscles tighten and the sweat on his forehead cleared, leaving behind a cool breeze. He took a deep breath and felt his exhaustion leave when he exhaled.

He willed himself to hurry and put on a burst of speed which left the 12 year old Feira behind him.

With relief he soon found he had almost reached his destination, it wasn't far now. He thought. Ahead he could see the ledge, which separated him from his destination, a 10-meter gap, which threatened to swallow him whole. He imagined a torrent wave of the other students running down after him, and put on another burst of speed he prepared himself, he tensed and leaped...

Only to realize midair that he wouldn't cover the distance, he had fallen short! Drayn didn't know what to do; he would die if he didn't do something fast! What would his teachers say? His desire to have fun causing his death! He tried to make himself go farther, using the Force he imagined himself floating to the other side.

He had used levitation before, to lift rocks and other things, but he had never tried it on himself! Could he use it on himself? He didn't have a choice. Closing his eyes, he opened himself to the Force, felt it reach inside and overwhelm his senses. He heard the strangled cries of the others and they saw him, felt their fear, wondering what they should do and finding they were too late.

Drayn felt time slow, felt himself pause and used the Force, felt it's light.

All this happened in less than a second, and Drayn opened his eyes as he saw the ground rush up to meet him, still holding the object in his arms, he hit the ground, hard. His first thought was of pain as tiny rocks bit into his skin, his second was that he had made it and

that he was safe.

He lay there for a time, he didn't know how long but he sat up straight when he heard a voice in fractured basic say softly:

"Next time, perhaps, play not these games you will?"

For the second time that day, Drayn found himself in Master Yoda's sanctum. The first time it was to tell him he was being considered for advanced training, now it was to be reprimanded. Great, Drayn thought, out of the broiler into the fire.

Yoda was walking around Drayn as he knelt before Yoda's chair, Yoda's lightsaber hung neatly at his waist moving back and forth as Yoda walked on. Yoda spoke in his classic monotone and fractured speech, he would have been comical, the same height as the kneeling Drayn, but the force behind Yoda's words cut off any amusement in the situation.

"Again tell you I, play not these games, listen not..." Drayn cut off Yoda's voice and glanced around the room. Yoda decided to have his quarters away from the learning center where the students and the other teachers slept, choosing to leave aloof of the distractions of his students, choosing to speak to only those he deemed worthy. It was sparse, with a bunk and comm unit in an adjoining room, and in this one the chair with the large viewport behind it.

Drayn looked outside and smiled inwardly at the stunned expressions of his fellow students as he, once again, beat them out at Tag Ball. Their games were even more frightening and dangerous than the professionals, choosing to play in the hazardous forest and using the Force to make it more interesting, Drayn proved today that it was indeed a reckless sport. And he was good at it, the adrenaline and nervousness while you're being chased was part of the thrill and...

"Listen!" Drayn was cut off as Yoda pounded his fist on the side of his chair, jumping out of his reverie; at least Drayn had the sense to look chagrined.

Yoda sighed. "Play not these games." Yoda looked him in the eyes threateningly. "To become a Jedi takes the most serious of minds, years, years of learning and understanding. Be wary, my student, the others have not yet stated their decision on your training, serious you be, if wish to become Jedi."

Though the teachers were not supposed to treat any student different than the others, Yoda had always treated Drayn cautiously, sensing in him the will which would make him a strong Jedi, one day. Drayn knew more and was more advanced than others his age, but he was yet to prove himself.

The advanced training would incorporate defense and fighting, including lightsaber sparring, and would prepare Drayn to become a Padawan.

"I will work harder Master Yoda, I will not disappoint you."

Yoda nodded and placed his hand on Drayn's shoulder, satisfied that his student understood his position.

Yoda watched as Drayn left his sanctum and once again he admonished himself for paying extra attention to the boy. It was not his place, he was a teacher and he was supposed to treat everyone the same, but he could not help himself from being cautious with Drayn.

In all the years Drayn had always amazed Yoda, being able to use the Force with apparently no conscious effort and being more perceptive of his surroundings than the others. He had always known the respect that Yoda deserved and the wisdom that inhabited his small form.

That is why Yoda chose to serve the Council of Twelve this way, teaching new Jedi, while still being available if sufficient cause to contact him arose.

But Drayn was at a crossroad, he would soon know if Drayn would be reckless or if he would follow the Code to the letter. Yoda knew that one day Drayn would be chosen by a Master to become his or her Padawan, and Yoda dreaded the day where he would have to say his farewells to Drayn.

Yoda sighed; Drayn could either become a great Jedi or a great disappointment, which depended on Drayn and his actions.

Across the galaxy on the planet known as Coruscant, the galaxy's capital, a young woman rose from a kneeling position and looked at her reviewers cautiously. The Jedi Council chamber seemed large and unwelcome to her, as did the 11 masters before her. She was 29 and she had been through what most Jedi Knights had only heard off. Wars and plagues she had fought, and she had won, earning her right to be reviewed by the Council.

"You are here" Dima, an old female twi'lek master began in her soft voice. "Because we have watched you carefully and believe now is the time for you to move on."

" 'Move on', Master?" The woman replied.

"Yes Ciela. Move on." Roghir, a master in flowing white hair and beard, looked at her through his steepled fingers.

"I don't understand Masters." She met the gaze of as many of the council members as she could, wondering what was going on behind their stony expressions.

Perhaps I should have worn a better robe, Ciela thought.

"She is ready to protect the good of the Republic, but, is she ready to teach another?" Karn Gey'lya, an old bothan, voiced his worries.

Viruul, a wookiee, put her gaze on him and looked at him reprovngly.

If you had doubts you should have voiced them at this morning's meeting. She growled.

"Well I didn't have them then..." he replied.

It does no good to speak of her now as though she isn't here, the decision has been made. She said forcefully.

"I believe we should have watched her longer...", he said half to himself. Soon their voices rose and mingled together in calm debate. Others joined, while some decided to wait for them to finish.

Ciela wet her lips nervously.

"Masters." she said. Karn stopped speaking and dismissed Viruul with a wave. Viruul glanced at him from the corner of her eye and growled.

"Do you mean to say," she asked tentatively "that you are considering me for Mastership?"

The voices rose again, and after Roghir waved them down Ciela thought to herself: So, this is what happens when Master Yoda isn't here.

"Yes." Roghir said. A worried expression must have crossed Ciela face, for Roghir smiled confidently. "You have learned enough, and have enough experience that we wish for you to teach another."

"Why not issue her a test?" Karn said, finding a solution to their problem. He discussed with the immediate masters around him in whispers; they nodded eagerly, passing along the plan.

It is a safe test, one which will show her teaching ability." Rilvuul conceded.

"I say she is ready now." Dima said, Roghir nodded in agreement.

"Well," Karn said. "If she is ready then the test will only prepare her for when she takes on an apprentice." He said evenly. But if she isn't, then this will only strengthen her and solve our problem. Viruul concluded.

Ciela saw the troubled expression on Roghir's face as he realized he had no choice, the Council was like a democracy and the majority seemed to have agreed with Karn.

"Very well." Roghir said, sighing. He looked at Ciela and not for the first time, Ciela marveled at the power in his gaze. "You will go to Voshir, there you will teach whomever you choose in lightsaber combat. If the student proves him or herself with the lightsaber, then you will have earned the title of Jedi Master." He stated, saying the last with a measure of eagerness. She saw the glint in his eyes and realized that she was leaving on a quest that would change her drastically, just as she had gone on when she became a Knight...

"So?" Drayn looked up from his stretching exercises at the eager expression on Vala's face. She was very pretty, with dark brown eyes and long curly black hair, he found her irresistible. But they were good friends and found that he had no time for what he felt.

" 'So?' what?" Drayn replied.

"So." she said, sitting on the ground next to him and beginning her own stretches. "What's your punishment? No advanced training? Is he going to make you run laps? What?" She looked at him worriedly and not for the first time Drayn wished he could express his feelings for her.

"Nothing is decided on the advanced training, and I have no punishment. Only a warning not to play the game again." He said casually, as if his future didn't matter to him.

"Figures." She said softly. He looked at her strangely.

"What's that supposed to mean?" he asked.

"Nothing, just that everyone knows you're his favorite."

"What?" he asked, he had never been this shocked. "That's ridiculous!"

"Oh come off it." She said with a grin. "He's always treated you differently, even when you were young he paid more attention to you."

Even as she said it Drayn knew it was true, the late night talks, the times he asked Drayn to accompany him to Coruscant or any other planet he needed to go to. When Drayn was ill the first one there taking him through the healing exercises was Master Yoda. Yoda treated him more like a son or grandson for that matter. Drayn was silent as he went through there stretches.

"What do the others say?" he asked her quietly.

She shrugged. "Some don't care. Others wish they were in your position." She got to her feet and stretched luxuriously.

"Don't worry about it, you deserve the extra attention, you work harder than the rest of us." Drayn rose after her.

"But isn't it wrong for Yoda to treat me differently, I thought the Code was strict on that."

Vala laughed softly. "Who is Master Yoda going to report to, he's the oldest member of the Council."

"True." He conceded. But he couldn't shake the feeling of dread that came with the thought of what would happen if he disappointed his teacher.

"They are all so young." Ciela said softly. She was gazing out the viewport in Yoda's sanctum, there, on the grounds of the forest she watched as one of the students blindfolded himself and sought the others out.

Yoda nodded. "Young they are, but teach one you must. Along the feeling of caution rides if one should turn to the dark side."

Ciela nodded taking his advice to heart. Below, all of the students were running and leaping frantically trying not to be caught by the blindfolded student.

He had dark brown hair and was standing still as a stone, his eyes closed, his head turned with every movement he heard. He was patient and had been standing like that for roughly 13 minutes now, not trusting himself to move.

"You have taught them well Master Yoda. But which do you think is ready?"

Yoda shook his head. "Not my place it is to say, lead you the Force will to the one who will become Jedi."

So it was up to her, she thought.

She had arrived just one hour ago, in a Council ship, a correllian freighter. Yoda had met her accompanied by some of his students; then and there she knew it would be a challenge. She couldn't imagine what it would be like teaching one of these innocent children to fight.

"Choose." Yoda said softly.

Ciela nodded distractedly and decided she must choose one fast, one, which looked ready.

"I choose..." she was about to choose that which seemed the eldest, but that boy, the one standing still drew her attention. As some of the others passed by him, while he was blindfolded, he moved quickly and grabbed one by the arm. Smiling he threw off the blindfold and handed it to the one he caught. He seemed to pause a moment as he looked up. He was looking at her!

She pointed at him as he turned back to the exercise "...him" she finished.

A strange expression crossed Yoda's face and she looked at him in puzzlement. "Is something wrong?" she asked. Had she chosen wrong? Was this boy dangerous, his future clouded?

"No, no" he said slowing, distractedly as if his mind were thousands of miles away. "Come, give you his file I will."

Ciela followed Yoda out of the sanctum, thinking there was much more here than the obvious.

She looked at the computer console aboard her ship, moving down her new student's file.

His full name was Drayn Hywel, found twelve years ago on a planet in the outer rim, after a pirate raid Republic personnel found him orphaned, with no relatives anywhere. If that wasn't strange he had a component in his blood which scientists couldn't identify, making his birth origin unknown. Along with his species. He was strong in the Force, his sensitivity to it outweighing his ability to use it. Notes along the bottom marked him as a potential explorer or scout. Checking his marks in his studies and reading his psyche profile, she found that she had chosen a puzzle, one that Yoda had been trying to solve himself. Ciela bit on her thumbnail thoughtfully, this Drayn was indeed intriguing, but would he be up to the challenge of wielding a lightsaber at such an early age?

She closed down the console, deciding to meditate and then sleep so that tomorrow she would be prepared for her first student.

"Master Yoda?" Drayn waited for the Jedi to turn and meet his gaze. "You called me?"

Yoda looked at him and found that his student was one step closer to leaving him. His large sanctum seemed incredibly claustrophobic now as he saw the nervousness on Drayn's face.

"Decided the others have on your training." Yoda said quietly.

Drayn licked his lips nervously; his throat had suddenly become dry.

"I see." He said, glancing away from his master. Yoda shook his head.

"So certain are you." Yoda turned and walked slowly around the large circle engraved in the floor. "Think not, feel, be prepared for all possibilities."

Drayn wasn't sure he understood, would he be granted advanced training or not? And if so, why was Yoda straying from the point. Yoda moved silently to the viewport, leaving his back to Drayn.

"Granted your advance training has been."

Drayn was more attuned to the Force than anyone he knew, except perhaps Master Yoda, and he sensed something strange coming from his master but he wasn't sure what it meant. Drayn willed down an urge to shout for joy, and contented himself with making a fist in his right hand.

"Shall we begin now Master?" Drayn asked, barely keeping a smile from tugging at the corners of his mouth.

Yoda's shoulders slumped, or so it seemed that way to Drayn.

"Understand you do not, train you I will not." Yoda's ears fell down to touch his shoulders as he turned around to face his protÃ©gÃ©. "To another that task has been given."

Drayn was sorry that Yoda himself wouldn't teach him, but it still didn't take away the elation and euphoria he felt from being granted advance training.

Drayn, more serious now, glanced out the viewport then back at his master. "I will train with Master Gredjuk?" he asked.

Yoda shook his head.

"Master Vra'ton?" he asked.

Again, Yoda shook his head.

Who could it be? Drayn thought.

"Train you will with another, a new Master." Yoda said grimly.

Drayn didn't know what to say, he didn't even know this 'new Master', perhaps the Master had come in the ship that arrived a day earlier. The others had all gone running, it wasn't everyday that a ship arrived. Drayn had missed it, unfortunately, because he was meditating.

"And when do I meet my master, I wish to begin training at once." Drayn said solemnly.

Yoda looked at him, and for a moment Drayn thought he detected a glint in Yoda's eyes as if he understood Drayn's motives.

"On her ship she is, leave you may." Yoda said.

Drayn bowed low, resting on one knee, he spoke forcefully.

"I will not disappoint you Master Yoda."

Drayn left, allowing the doors to Yoda's sanctum to close behind him quietly. Behind him, still standing at the viewport, Yoda looked after his student.

"May the Force be with you." he said.

Ciela awoke quickly as she sensed a presence making it's way to the ship. Throwing on her robe, she quickly clipped her lightsaber to her belt and made up her hair in a long brown ponytail falling over her back. She calmed herself, he was her first student, but that didn't mean that training him would be difficult. She could only try to do her best, as her master had done for her.

Ciela opened the main hatchway and walked out into the rays of sunlight falling down from overhead. It would be a hot day, she thought. All the better since she would train her student in the forest, she felt the cool breeze of the Force wash over her, taking away the heat.

In the distance she could see Drayn, he was walking with a sure stride which covered his nervousness and cloaked him like a robe. His brown hair was matted to his forehead from the heat, but no signs of discomfort showed on his face. He was nice to look at, and Ciela knew that one day when this boy would grow he would be a handsome one indeed. The first thing Ciela saw about her student as he approached was his eyes, a powerful brown which seemed to hold her gaze, and caused a flush to greet her cheeks.

As he was a meter away, he bowed low from the waist and stared into her eyes.

"I am Drayn, Master."

As he bowed from the waist he introduced himself, and found that he couldn't help admiring the curves on this woman. She was very pretty, and seemed to be cut from ice itself. She stood in place, as if she was so sure of herself and confident that nothing could make her distraught or uncomfortable.

His view changed however, when she seemed not to know what to with her hands and spoke in a low, quiet voice.

"I am Ciela my student, and I will teach you the ways of the Jedi. But be warned." And she held up finger, as if to emphasize her point. "It will a long road, and any pain you receive during this training will only strengthen you and prepare you for what's to come. You must take everything I say to heart, if you wish to become a Jedi."

Drayn had no doubt that this training would prove very interesting indeed.

Drayn had aches all over his body, everyday the training sessions grew more rigorous and more tiresome. Ciela hadn't wasted anytime, taking Drayn through the hand to hand fighting techniques first. Each exercise focused on defense and soon after Drayn had made the same blocks over and over, he was continually prepared for attack. His reflexes sharpened, he fell into the fighting and defensive stances comfortably.

Days were monotonous, he awoke, he sought out Ciela and he trained. That was his day.

And through time he discovered little by little about his new master, taught by a caamasi master on some out of the way planet she had then been dispatched to handle the Outer Rim, where the Republic didn't exist.

She was young, had never married, and hadn't even thought of having children. Perhaps because she wouldn't be able to bear losing them if they turned out to be Force sensitive, perhaps that was her worry. Drayn thought.

In his training Ciela injected the Force, telling him to sense his opponent and be conscious of his surroundings. They often sparred and Drayn found that his sensitivity to the Force aided him in this area and gave him an advantage. It was as if he could hear her thoughts and motives, he knew what move she would make before she made it.

Before, Drayn had always been wary of using the Force, he wasn't as able as some others at telekinesis and being able to alter minds. It was even difficult for him to absorb energy of any kind, but one thing he had was his unique perspective and his sensitivity. Now he found himself more confident, Ciela had told him repeatedly that he was more able at fighting and sensing through the Force than any other she had met and that made him proud of himself. But he was cautious, if he became to egotistical it could disrupt his thoughts and could lead to the dark side, he was always cautious of that.

Soon, Ciela had begun teaching him the basic of lightsaber fighting, and it was then that sensing through the Force was more important to Drayn. Lightsaber fighting was more intricate than hand to hand and so many combinations of attacks were possible, making it imperative that Drayn knew his opponents motives.

They began by sparring with wooden training swords, Drayn was thankful they were padded, he couldn't imagine the pain Ciela would inflict on him otherwise.

But Drayn had another fault, he would grow tired quickly and found that the ability to continually rejuvenate himself with the Force was difficult to reach.

"You must find a quiet place," Ciela had told him on one day he had grown too tired to continue. "A place where no one disturbs you so that you're mind may regain strength, when you're mind is healed it is easy to heal you're body." Sure, Drayn thought, no problem. Though it was kind of hard to find a 'quiet place' when you were guarding yourself from your opponent's blade.

Drayn learned the three rings of defense :The outer ring , middle ring, and inner ring. Drayn noted that the middle ring was very effective when blocking bolts from a remote.

He and Ciela often sparred and today was no exception, except something was different.

This morning as Ciela had walked down from her ship's ramp she had thrown Drayn something. He caught it deftly in his right hand, and as he looked down, he saw that it was a lightsaber. A very immaculate one at that, the grip was firm and comfortable in his palm. Drayn ignited it and marveled at the wondrous yellow blade which extended from within. He felt the strength and power that the previous owner had commanded, and also felt the tell telling signs of pain. Whoever the owner had been they had died brutally and painfully.

Drayn heard another lightsaber ignite and glanced up to see Ciela ignite her bright white blade.

"Until you finish constructing your own." She elaborated. Drayn nodded in reply, he had been constructing his lighstaber for a month now, perfecting it but he had yet to choose a crystal.

"If I'm ever finished." Drayn said, smiling slowly. Ciela had watched over him as he made small modifications to his saber, she had also been there when he burnt his finger and melted the covering down as he inserted the power coupling wrong.

She smiled in return shaking her head "You sure ran for that water fast."

"Not as fast as you ran to put out the fire, Master." He said, grinning.

She laughed softly at the memory, Drayn swearing as he doused cold water over his hand, and herself running frantically, finally deciding to just smother the fire in a Force bubble. They were silent a moment as they chased the laughter out of there expressions, Drayn grew serious and glanced at her from hooded eyes, still swinging and guarding with the lightsaber experimentally.

"Whose was this?" he asked, nodding at the saber in his hand.

Ciela sighed and her gaze grew distant as if she was reliving the memory. "It was a fellow Jedi's, she and I were ambushed in the outer rim, I survived, she didn't." Drayn decided not to breach the subject again.

Ciela brought up her saber in the engage position, "Prepare yourself, my student." Her white lightsaber blazed and casted an eerie glow over her face.

Drayn brought up the lightsaber in his hands and felt behind it the wisdom of the owner before him. He felt strength and confidence but that soon evaporated. They were sparring with REAL lightsaber, he could lose a limb, or worse, his head. It would be up to Ciela to control herself enough to be sure she didn't cut Drayn. And it would be up to Drayn to stop his own blow if Ciela would be injured by it.

The exercise would allow Drayn to concentrate and focus on his bearings, allowing him to learn control.

Ciela brought out something from one of her robes pockets, a blindfold, and Drayn tensed as she threw it to him.

"Bind your eyes." She instructed, as if she were telling him to blink, not that she was telling him to blind fold himself and be open to a fatal cut from her saber.

"Um.." Drayn fingered the blindfold uncertainly "Are you certain Master? I mean, blindfolded I won't be able to stop my attack and.."

"Drayn," she said softly "you will have to rely on what you're feeling and sensing, not on what you're seeing."

Drayn extinguished his blade and tied the blindfold over his eyes, he couldn't see a thing and he suddenly felt uneasy, as if a lump had made itself appear in the gut of his stomach.

"Feel, don't think, and you will be fine." She said breezily.

Drayn heard the snap-hiss as he ignited his blade, closing his eyes, he opened himself to the Force.

He found that now that he wasn't limited by his sight, he could sense much easier, in fact it was even better than seeing. It was as if he could see every minuscule detail of everything around him, it was as if he could hear what Ciela was thinking. He 'looked' over at her and saw her presence, he felt the vibrations in the Force as she moved, and he prayed that when they started sparring he wouldn't lose his perspective.

He was wondering if the attack would ever come, when it did. She came in high and fast, making a try to cut him from the shoulder to his chest, he knew the blow was coming though.

He brought up his blade and fended it off, he pushed her blade to the side and was rewarded with a punch to the jaw. He didn't know THAT was coming, he would have to be more careful in the future.

Ciela jumped over her student's head and swung her lightsaber in a large arc, he blocked the blow, and Ciela felt a certain maternal pride come over her. She had trained him well so far.

She tensed and then ran at him, making swipe after swipe with her saber, clashing her saber against his in the air, she flicked her

wrists and brought it down to cut his legs. He leaped and turned midair, landing on her shoulder, he pushed off and landed far in back of her. She turned back frantically, she was temporarily vulnerable. She attacked from the side and was surprised when he matched her blow for blow, spun and kicked her feet out from under her.

She flipped back to her feet and prepared herself.

Keiran was growing tired and weary, his blows were coming less frequently, he had slowed by milliseconds, milliseconds he needed. All was quiet and Drayn suddenly had the thought that something was behind him. He slashed the saber over his head protect his back, the feedback from Ciela's saber vibrated along his arm and caused it to ache, twisting he came around to block her furious cuts.

Ciela knew she was making him tired, he had slowed and she decided to use that to her advantage. She made her cuts stronger and more brutal, going for brute strength rather than finesse. Sweat was pouring down her students face as she made a cut along his back. It was swiftly parried and he turned to face her. He surprised her now by going on the offensive, he swung at her chest, then her head, finally he made to cut one of her arms off. She blocked each one with precision, deftly pushed his saber to the side and swung her right hand at his head.

Drayn had been waiting, allowing his patience to control his actions. But he was tired of it all, he swung forcefully, going on the offensive. She blocked each one, which was no surprise, she was easily winning this battle. On his last he made for her arm, she pushed his saber to the side and he found his left side vulnerable. He felt through the Force the vibrations, and knew she was making a punch at his head.

She swung, as Drayn swiftly swung around, allowing her fist to pass harmlessly by the back his skull. He twisted and brought his foot up behind her back as he kicked her. She fell on the ground roughly and rolled, feeling the dirt and rocks digging into her flesh. She rose and swung her lighstaber deftly, preparing for another attack.

Drayn had kicked her hard, and he heard her grunt of pain as she landed on the ground, smiling inwardly, he used the time to find his quiet place. He struggled to stay calm and rationalized that there would be no point continuing the fight if he didn't use the Force to relax his tense muscles.

He felt it's cooling breeze and felt stronger, as if he had more energy. Now he allowed his smile as he felt Ciela run at him.

She swung down from his head to his feet, her blade met his and he pushed it away from himself with such speed that Ciela paused. Her blade in the air pushed against his, she felt his hard kick that landed flat on her abdomen making her gasp in pain. He spun quickly and elbowed her in the back of her skull, she landed on the ground roughly. Her saber flew from her hand to land on the ground far away, she made to get up when a familiar hum stopped her. Drayn's saber was at her throat.

Drayn felt elated when Ciela awoke to find his saber blade threateningly close to her throat. He felt her surprise at being caught so off guard and he smiled.

Ciela closed her eyes and pushed with the Force, Drayn flew away from her, his saber closing down as he fell back against a tree trunk roughly. She flipped to her feet and outstretched her hand. Soon her saber met her hand and she ignited it quickly, welcoming it's return, and the familiar hum of it as she swung it.

Drayn was airborne, and he cried out in pain as his back smacked against a tree trunk, he willed his head forward to keep from hitting it against the trunk. The lightsaber fell from his hand and closed down as it landed on the ground softly. He landed on the grass with a bump and he whimpered softly as he felt the growing bruise on his back. She was right when she said the training would hurt. He knew that Ciela had her saber back in her hand and that she was walking to him, but he couldn't move even if he wanted to. He looked up into her eyes painfully and saw her bleeding mouth and large bruise on her cheek, she closed down her saber and offered him her hand.

Though they sparred often after that, it was never quite as brutal as that first time. Drayn had required to go into a healing trance for a day and Ciela had had to heal the cuts and bruises along her face, though Drayn comforted her for days that the mark on her cheek was barely noticeable, a lie. Ciela spoke to Yoda frequently after that day, convinced that Drayn was ready and that he had proven himself with the blade. Unfortunately the Council had very high expectations of her student, and just because he could match her in a duel did not mean he had proven himself. Of course, she had a plan, one which when completed Drayn would have proven himself and Ciela would be able to join the ranks of the Jedi Masters, if Drayn survived.

Drayn walked slowly through the dense foliage of the forest, enjoying the comfortable feel of his new lightsaber hitting against his thigh. It was reassuring, knowing that he had his own blade ready in case anything happened, though he had to resist the urge to ignite the weapon constantly.

Drayn's mind wandered as he pushed himself to reach his objective, the clearing in the forest where Ciela had trained him in lightsaber combat.

Drayn had been training with Ciela for half a year now, she had been there for his twelfth birthday and she had constantly taught him everything she knew about combat. Drayn didn't know where this would lead, in little under a year he was to be chosen by a Master to be a Padawan, but when would his training under Ciela cease? And when she left, would he go with her, or would he stay by Yoda's side? Drayn knew for a fact that Yoda hadn't taken on a Padawan for a longtime, and he doubted that the aging master would take another.

Drayn pushed a long overhanging branch out of his way and felt small water droplets fall off it's leaves, it had rained the night before and now the dew and moisture were running down the plants, to make the forest feel increasingly humid.

Drayn sighed as the branches in front of him finally opened up into the familiar clearing in which Drayn had spent many weeks going through drills and sparing with Ciela. He spotted her on the far side, she was sitting atop one of the large boulders comfortably, her legs crossed and face expectant.

"It took you some time." She stated simply, neither meeting nor evading his gaze.

Drayn smiled gently. "I was not aware we were on a time constriction." She nodded in concession and for a moment Drayn thought something was odd about her this morning, she wore solemnity like a cloak, and right away Drayn decided that it didn't look good on her.

She descended from the boulder gently, landing on the ground without making a sound. Swiftly, she crossed to where he was and looked at him intently. Wisps of her brown hair had become undone from her ponytail and they hung around her face as if put there expertly.

"Today," she said, pacing around him quietly. "We will go through a new exercise, one which you are prepared for."

Drayn nodded mutely, not liking the silent message which seemed to be behind her words.

"You will start from here," she said loudly enough, but said this last with a measure of calmness "and make your way to the other side, until you are through the forest and at the nearest field." She said it as if it was any ordinary exercise, but from the beginning of the forest to its end took a three day trek.

"You will have nothing but what you have with you now." Drayn's hand suddenly went to the comforting weight of his lightsaber, but that was all he had. No matter how good a weapon the lightsaber was, it couldn't make up for the lack of medkit, bundle, and rations. Not in Drayn's estimation.

"You will complete the journey as quickly or slowly as you see fit, when you are finished, you will be marked and noted on your performance."

Perfect, Drayn thought, but better to go through this now without argument than argue and have to go through it later anyway.

"Will you be following at a distance?" Drayn asked. Ciela looked thoughtful for a moment, if she followed her student the Council would probably think she didn't have enough confidence in him to allow him to complete his task on his own, unattended.

"No." she said. "But you will not be on your own Drayn..."

"I know," Drayn said softly "I have the Force with me on this journey, it will watch over me, along with my lightsaber."

Ciela nodded in agreement, and watched sorrowfully as he covered the distance to the entrance in the deep forest, and entered without so much as a glance behind his back.

"Think he is ready, do you?" Yoda said thoughtfully.

Ciela glanced up from her position at the viewport, below, the other students began going through their lightsaber training, some not quite as adept as Drayn.

"After he completes this task Master Yoda," she said, brushing her hair back from her shoulders, "No one will be able to dispute my claim that he is ready."

Yoda nodded in agreement, worry had long fallen from his face, his student had a quick wit and a strong sense for the Force, no doubt he would be fine.

"Many dangers there are in the forest, at night even more." He said calmly.

Which was true, Ciela thought, she had read up on this world and there were many dangers. The diven, insects which placed their tiny eggs inside the body of a host as it bit them, could cause extreme fatigue and fever. Triken, large bodied reptiles, had three horns upon its large body and one sting from its poisonous tail caused disturbing hallucinations. Among the others were various annoyances, but at night, her student would have to be more wary of predators. It would do no good for her student to be killed by one of them while asleep, he would have to watch himself.

Ciela sighed, she knew Drayn was prepared, but the thoughts still disturbed her: Had she taught Drayn well enough?

Drayn walked determinedly through the large forest, his feet crushed the foliage and branches beneath him, and in the distance he could hear various animals crying and howling. As his feet walked along a determined path, his mind wandered. He thought of the Force and its implications on the Code. He knew that it took a philosophical mind to adequately argue the Force and the Code, but he often thought about that which the Masters thought about.

A long time ago, the Jedi were a group of theorists and philosophers who lived in seclusion. But, over several centuries, they became aware of something more, a kind of force.

From that moment on, the monastic Jedi dedicated themselves to this "Force", trying to master its power. By the time of the Republic, the Jedi were known as peace keepers and tools of justice. But one thing that disturbed Drayn, was that most of those Jedi had used the dark side without knowing it. Drayn knew for a fact that the Jedi didn't break up into light and dark sides until millennia after the Republic was formed. Thanks to the Force, the light Jedi overthrew the dark, and the dark were exiled.

The dark Jedi were indeed a mystery, the Sith were long gone of course, but Drayn couldn't help but shake the fact that the Old Republic's saviors had once been dark Jedi. What had happened during that time??? What had caused the dark Jedi to lose their focus??? That was a mystery to even Master Yoda, and Drayn had once had a chance to speak to the Jedi historian Vinga'da on the matter.

He had confided in Drayn that no one knew what had happened, and it was a very disturbing fact indeed, and that he only knew of one place where the truth could be told: In a Sith library.

Of course, those were long destroyed, but Vinga'da had said that he would continue to search for one until the day he would be one with the Force. A noble quest, if Drayn had ever heard of one.

Drayn paused, he had heard something in the distance, going back through his memory he played it in more detail: It was a kind of splashing and growling noise, and it was coming from the east.

Drayn suddenly became very aware of how dry and parched his throat was, it wouldn't hurt to take a quick detour to get a drink of water. Drayn extended his sphere of responsibility, pushing it in the direction of the running water, and soon felt the loud noises of many lifeforms together. It was too much for his senses and Drayn brought his sphere in tighter, relishing the comparable silence.

His khaki jumpsuit had droplets of water on it, but not from sweat, Drayn found that using the Force to keep insects and the heat away was comforting. Even though covered in a long brown robe, Drayn was cool underneath, the Force kept him that way, continually revitalizing his body.

Ahead, Drayn could make out the signs of water running, and unconsciously he speeded up. His thirst outweighing his patience. What he came upon, however, was not what he was expecting.

The lake was large, and crystal blue water flowed from waterfalls on the side to the end of the lake. To Drayn it looked very deep, and branches from nearby trees seemed to hang towards the water, as if to drink from it. But what disturbed Drayn, was that in the center of the lake, a small furry creature was struggling frantically. Around it were not much larger reptilian like creatures, but they had the small creature, they outnumbered the furry one, seven to one. Drayn could tell that the creatures had waited for the creature to make it's appearance, they had trapped it. The small one was struggling frantically trying to find a way out of the reptiles grasp.

Drayn didn't know what to do, Yoda would tell him that it was natural and that nature should always take it's course. But Drayn wasn't cold hearted and he couldn't help but feel sorry for the poor creature. As Drayn struggled with his emotions and his duty as a Jedi. One of the reptiles snaked it's tongue around the furry creature, as if tasting it. Without conscious thought Drayn broke away from his reverie, brought out his lightsaber and yelled a terrifying scream.

He could sense the thoughts of the reptiles, could see them in their own minds hunting and trapping weak prey. Hunger overrode their senses and they wanted nothing more than to eat the small creature they had trapped. As Drayn screamed he could sense their shift of focus, and he sensed that they would deal with him also, it wasn't the first time they had hunted a human.

Drayn splashed down in the center of the lake, he used the Force to keep himself afloat and as one of the creatures snaked towards him he ignited his lightsaber.

A shaft of blue erupted in a snap-hiss, and Drayn spoke softly to the creatures.

"Leave," he showed a mental picture to them, using the Force to invade their thoughts, "or you will be hurt." He felt their hesitation, unfortunately it lasted only a minute before the leader of the pack leaped towards him, it's fangs visible.

Drayn swung his saber, cleaving the reptiles arm from it's body,

stubbornly it continued the attack. Drayn spun and finished the job, cutting the reptiles head from it's body. Purple ichor flew from the cut, and the water around his feet became dark with it's blood. Drayn turned as two others snaked their way to him while the remaining four dived under the water. The first made a swipe for it's head, nine inch claws extended, Drayn cut the limb off and shifted his lightsaber to the second attacker.

It leapt at him, hissing, Drayn spun and shoved his lightsaber into the reptile's back. It kept on fighting, struggling as it was still held onto the lightsaber. Drayn dislodged his saber from it's body and finished the job as he cut from it's shoulder to it's leg, two meaty clumps splashed down into the water, making it darker.

Drayn breathed a gasp and turned when he saw his other attacker arise from the water, where he had cut it's arm off a new one was growing. A yellow substance covered his new arm, and Drayn couldn't believe what he was seeing.

The reptiles could grow new limbs, which greatly complicated things. Drayn cut it in half quickly, and as it's remains fell into the water, Drayn extended his sphere.

He couldn't distinguish the other reptiles under water, from the various other creatures. A splash of water erupted behind him and Drayn swung his saber in back, he missed as the reptile dodged. Drayn leaped behind him as another reptile appeared. Drayn extended his hand palm outward and Force pushed the reptile away from him, he cut the from the top of it's head to the groin, and watched as it cried out in pain and fell into the water. He turned and cut down another as it ran at him. The one he pushed away rose to it's feet and splashed towards him, it snaked out it's tongue and hissed threateningly, Drayn swung his saber and cut it's tongue. Moving faster before it could recover, Drayn jumped and made one long horizontal cut, gratified when the reptile sunk into the water.

He turned and saw the last reptile ran to the water fall and disappear behind it.

Drayn breathed a sigh of relief and extinguished his lightsaber, he placed it back on his belt, and began splashing his way toward the furry creature. It seemed to be in a state of shock, it had cowered towards the edge of the water as the fight began. As Drayn drew closer to the creature he could make out it's features more clearly.

It looked like one of the dolls given to young girls, it was brown and had a mask of gray around it's eyes and on it's belly. It had long ears which fell about it's shoulders like hair.

Drayn walked closer and was surprised when the creature moved away, after all he had saved it's life. The creature whimpered and Drayn brought up an image from it's mind.

Lonely, lost from it's pack, it had come to forage for food and drink, but had been caught by surprise by the reptiles. They had made him struggle in fear and pain before they finally decided to eat him. They the stranger with the blue light had come, it had killed it's attackers and now it would kill it.

Drayn shook his head trying to be rid of the image as he placed another in it's mind.

"I am a friend." Drayn said uncertainly. He knew the creature was intelligent, could even speak in it's own crude language, and Drayn tried to make the creature understand.

It seemed to work for the creature came a bit closer and looked at him curiously.

You speak my language The voice was a bit high pitched and was distinctly female, behind the words Drayn could detect the sense of surprise as it digested this new information.

"Yes, I will not harm you." Drayn said comfortingly, he was elated that he was able to communicate with this creature so easily.

The creature considered this and came closer, they were no more than two meters away from each other now.

Thank you she said, visibly relaxing. Drayn nodded in reply and saw that he would have to make the first move.

"My name's Drayn." He said, making his way toward the shore. She stepped beside him, and they rose onto the shore together.

I am Sera She said, she then shook herself strongly and droplets of water flew away from her body. She then patted her self down to make her fur stay straight against her. Drayn stood there sensing what was around him, he rung out his robe and water flowed from it, he shook his head and more water came from his hair. He sighed, it would take no time for him to dry out in this heat, he thought.

I have seen your kind before," Sera said, studying him. My clan have never approached you, but we often see you in the hills. She followed Drayn as he walked off into the forest once again, continuing his journey. Many just sit and listen to the sounds of the forest, my clan make fun of your kind, all you do is sit and listen. She smiled, showing small sharp teeth. I know better now, you are great fighters

Drayn breathed deeply and sensed the minds of the other creatures in the forest.

"Which direction are you headed?" He asked her, she pointed to the far end of the forest and Drayn was glad he would have a companion in the days that followed.

I must rejoin my clan, she said strongly I was separated from them during a foraging journey and have not seen them since.

Drayn nodded, it must have been hard for her, being all alone.

"Well," he said, "I just happen to be going your way." She smiled at him and they began their trek through the forest.

Sera looked up from her place at the fire and studied her companion thoughtfully, to her he seemed a bit odd but he obviously had a caring soul. He had saved her and for that she was grateful, but she

couldn't understand how he could wear such long robes in the heat. She soon found out strange things about her companion, he found their food easily and he could walk for such a long time without resting. But he was very young and small compared to the others of his kind she had seen.

It surprised her that he could speak her tongue, she had thought that only members of her species had known it, her companion was special indeed.

She found later that he was on a great journey to where the forest ended, one which his teacher had put him on. It was a dangerous journey and throughout the day she had informed him of the various predators and creatures to watch out for, also their weaknesses.

Sera felt safe for the first time since she had been separated from her clan, she knew that if anything happened he would take care of things.

As her companion closed his eyes and rested against a nearby rock, Sera closed hers and soon she was fast asleep.

...so by then my uncle had decided to leave for more berries, later I decided to go after... Sera continued to speak about her journey and her life with her clan, Drayn listened attentively but sometimes his mind wandered upon questions.

Like how could a being so small, talk so much? He dwelled amusingly. He laughed at her jokes and nodded encouragingly, understanding that she hadn't had anyone to speak to for a long time and that she was probably scared of travelling through the forest this way.

Closing his eyes, Drayn sighed inwardly, it would take all of his control not to go crazy during this journey.

After some time, he managed to convince Sera to take a rest. They chose a large clearing which, for the most part, seemed without any insects.

Drayn leaned against a large tree while Sera chose to sit on a smooth rock not far away. Drayn calmed himself and closed his eyes thankfully, maybe if he rested a moment he would feel better. Sera scratched at her arm and felt herself falling asleep, they had walked a long way and she needed to catch her breath for a moment.

As Drayn's mind wandered and he felt himself, easing away into a slumber, he heard a loud scream.

His eyes shot open as Sera jumped up from the "rock" and ran quickly to his side, all the way screaming at the top of her lungs. Four legs came out of the rock and soon a tail and a large snout with two beady eyes at the top came after. The "rock" rose up on it's four legs, looked at Sera calmly, and lumbered away, taking it's time to maneuver the over the rocky ground.

Sera stopped screaming and looked at Drayn abashadely.

"It was even smaller than you." Drayn said calmly, smiling inwardly.

It would have eaten me! Did you see the look in it's eyes, it practically wanted to rip me apart right there and then... she gestured wildly, exaggerating every fact.

Drayn fell back against the tree trunk, he closed his eyes and sighed, thinking about small, crazy, furry creatures who talked too much, and how quiet it would be when Sera rejoined her clan.

Drayn awoke slowly, his senses dulled by sleep, he struggled to be rid of the fuzzy feeling swimming around in his head. Through half-lidded eyes he saw rays of sunlight, pour from above. He breathed a sigh and calmed himself with the Force, as he gradually became calmer he opened himself with the Force and was surprised when he felt the presence of a dozen beings around him. He opened his eyes quickly, the fuzziness gone. He had a view of a large furry face in front of his own before he felt an impact on his head, then all went black.

Again, for the second time, Drayn awoke. This time it was with a large pounding in his head. Drayn closed his eyes against the pain and sought out it's origin. He felt deep within himself and found the center of his pain: a bruised and inflated blood vessel. He felt the Force, willed it to release the pressure around the vessel, and slowly began the healing process. As the pressure eased, Drayn only felt a dull pain in the back of his skull, but he could sense the injured vessel repairing itself. Drayn pushed the dull pain from his mind and felt the welcoming Force settle over it like a wet blanket.

He rose on his elbows and suddenly became very aware of two high pitched voices screaming at each other. Drayn seemed to be using the Force more and more of late and this time was of no exception as he used it to understand what the voices were saying.

We thought he was an attacker. an old gravely one said, distinctly male.

Well he isn't. Sera, yelling at the male, seemed very upset. He saved my life, and I can tell you he won't be very happy when he wakes up because you hit him.

So that was why his head hurt, Drayn looked around him and made out the other exasperated faces of the creatures around him. They were all the same species as Sera but Drayn could make out red, brown, yellow and even blue colored masks.

He lifted his head and a wave of dizziness overtook him, he groaned involuntarily and soon Sera had ran to his side.

Are you alright? she asked him anxiously, holding his head in her hands. I'm sorry they did that, they didn't know you were friendly, it's not their fault, don't be angry... she rambled on and soon Drayn wished he could have just stayed unconscious. With Sera's help Drayn had soon made to a sitting position.

Drayn Sera said his voice strangely as her throat struggled to say the name with her alien tongue. She moved him to face the other creature, the one she had yelled at. This is my brother.

Drayn looked back behind his shoulder and waved as Sera and the others waved back. After a day resting and speaking with Sera's clan he had decided it was time to continue his journey, leaving Sera to stay in the comfort of her clan. He had learned quite a bit while traveling with Sera for three days. Mostly that even though it was a Jedi's duty to uphold and pay strict attention to the unifying Force, it was sometimes gratifying to pay attention to the living Force and the beings around him. He had dined with Sera's clan , and had listened to their stories of great battles fought by their species.

Drayn looked up at the noon sky and put on a faster pace. Sera's clan had ushered him that the edge of the Forest wasn't more than another day away. His robe swirled around him, and soon Drayn felt a small droplet of rain fall upon his head. Drayn put out his hand and felt another droplet fall upon it and make it's way down along the side, before it fell onto the ground.

Drayn brought up the hood of his robe around his face, and as the rain grew stronger and more steady, he continued his trek.

Soon, the rain became too much for him, and a strong wind had begun to howl threateningly. Drayn brushed droplets of water from his face

and pulled his robe around himself tighter, in the distance he heard the crack of thunder and lightning.

He struggled against the wind and breathed a sigh of relief as he saw a cave a few yards ahead of him. He moved with purpose and put up a Force wall in front of him, shielding him from most of the rain.

The cave was large and warm, soon Drayn had made his way inside.

He was in the process of ringing water from his robe as he heard a sound in the back of the cave.

Drayn turned quickly and heightened his sight, in the darkness his gaze flicked across a nest of forms in a corner. He walked towards it cautiously and felt the oppressing silence of the cave. His feet echoed on the ground, then as he could make out the forms in the nest he heard a low cry.

There were three small reptilian like creatures inside, they had three small buds on there heads where horns would soon grow and small whiplike tails. Another of them gave a small cry and Drayn could see the lack of teeth in it's large beak of a mouth.

Babies, Drayn thought, and where there were babies, a mother wouldn't be far behind.

He rose quickly and ran out of the cave as fast as he could, if the babies were that big he would hate to see the size of the mother.

Outside the storm was in full throttle and Drayn once again struggled against the wind. Unfortunately, as he was leaving, the mother had been entering.

The mother was huge, twenty feet long and ten high, the three long horns on it's head were fully grown and poked from it's head threateningly. It opened it's large mouth and rows upon rows of razor teeth were visible. The creature waved it's whip like tail, and at the tip Drayn could see a kind of spike.

The mother lifted it's head upon sighting Drayn and cried a loud, brutal, howl. It stamped it's foot threateningly upon the ground, shaking it. Drayn tried to use the Force to mask his presence, but the creature was too focused on him, making it impossible to affect the mind.

Drayn looked around him frantically, droplets of water ran down his forehead into his eyes and he blinked quickly.

The mother seemed to glare at him, she roared once more and then charged, horns extended. Drayn leaped to the side, landing onto his back and then rolling to his feet.

The mother's horns went into a tree and she tore them free forcefully. The tree trunk shattered and it's pieces went flailing in all directions.

Lightning crashed down threateningly nearby and Drayn hand went to his lightsaber. He didn't want to kill the creature, only frighten it, he couldn't bear the thought of those babies in the cave without a mother.

His hand fell to his lightsaber... and came up empty!

He cursed softly and looked about quickly as the mother prepared for her next charge.

She shook her large head once, dislodging whatever pieces of the tree trunk were left.

Drayn sensed his lightsaber 30 meters away, he grasped for it frantically with the Force, willing it to return to his hand.

He saw the handle twitch feebly in the light of the thunder, he sharpened his senses and calmed himself. Again he saw the handle twitch slightly. The mother roared and Drayn stood still as stone, if he moved again she might charge him.

Come on, he thought. The lightsaber still twitched faintly and Drayn heard his Master's words in his mind: FIND A QUIET PLACE.

The mother charged at him, and Drayn strengthened his resolve. The mother slowed as she approached him, and soon Drayn felt as if he was breathing once every minute. Time slowed around him, and soon he could the droplets of rain as they fell from the sky. He blocked out all noise and thought of the saber leaping into his hand, he felt it twitch more strongly.

Then time speeded up...

He leapt as high up as he could, just as his legs cleared out of the way, the mother once again crashed into a tree. Drayn, for the first time, felt as if he could live in the Force. He felt like he was covered in it, and that it filled every inch of his body. He felt as

if he could do anything, as if he were invincible.

The lightsaber flew into his hand and he ignited it in the air triumphantly.

He landed in back of the mother and spun about quickly, he felt a grin split his features, but it was whipped away as the mother hit him with her tail spike.

He felt the spike lodge into his back, blood dropped from the cut, and he gasped painfully.

He ran feebly out of the mother's way as once again she charged into another tree behind him.

His head buzzed, his thoughts were clouded, and as he looked back at the mother he did a double-take. There were two of them now, no he was seeing double. He turned again and saw a large red haze in his way, he was seeing things, there must have been poison in the spike, he resolved calmly.

He didn't know what was real or fake, he felt himself looking about frantically, trying to distinguish the illusion from the reality.

He felt himself getting worse, seeing large holes in the earth appearing before his feet.

Ciela had blind folded him once, could he do it again. He calmed himself and cut off his sense of vision. He was in all terms of the word, blind.

Thankfully, he felt his Force sense return, and he saw the mother charge at him. He saw the Force of the trees and of the mother, leak off in waves. He felt the mother's rage and hesitation.

He leapt in the air, ignited his saber and welcomed the hum as he cut off the large branch of a tree overhead.

The branch crashed down the earth loudly, causing vibrations to shake the ground.

He landed, and ran as fast as he could to leave the mother behind. With the large branch in her way, the mother had no choice but to abandon her charge, and lumber into the cave to take charge of her young.

Drayn sighed as he sat on a boulder and deal with the effects of the poison. The rain had long stopped and now Drayn felt the heat of the sun pour down on him. He heard the animals and sensed their thoughts and feelings through the Force. He felt bruises make themselves known along the length of his body, and he closed his eyes and went into a healing trance.

Ciela felt her student's approach through the Force, and she got up from her perch on a rock and looked about eagerly. Hopefully he was in good health.

She had waited for him at the rock, starting the second day. After all her future was in his hands. Now that she saw him move through

the break of the forest, she saw that he had small cuts and bruises on him, but he was relatively unscathed. Now no one could dispute the claim that he could handle himself adequately.

He stood in front of her and he felt a grin split his features, he willed it under control as he bowed from the waist and looked at her through open and truly seeing eyes.

"I have completed the exercise set before me Master." He said quietly.

Ciela felt there was something different about her student, but she pushed the thought aside.

"Welcome my student, did you learn from the exercise?" Her gaze flicked over his features and she saw the exhaustion lined, but also a new found respect.

"I have indeed master, and I can say that I will also put my new knowledge to good use." He seemed to hold a secret of some kind and Ciela was tempted to ask him exactly WHAT he learned.

"Then welcome back my student, you are now farther along the road to becoming a Jedi Knight."

Yoda looked up from his seat at his chair and nodded mutely at the comm message before him. In front of him, in the rays of sunlight that flickered from the viewport fell onto Ciela's soft features.

"Has the Council decided Master?" she asked, still as stone, she had a calm reserve shroud her emotions and thoughts, becoming what a Jedi was supposed to.

Yoda nodded mutely "Decided it has." He knew that Ciela would say nothing else, and he couldn't help but ask her, to make sure his vote was correct, a question that dwelled on his mind.

"Easy for you was it to train the boy?" he didn't glance up from the comm message and listened raptly as she answered his question earnestly.

"It was difficult master, I won't lie to you." She said. "He is a fast learner and has a quick wit, but I'm afraid his feelings seem to interfere with his thoughts and actions." She felt a twinge of uneasiness arise in her gut, and prayed that it didn't show on her features. "His sense is strong, stronger perhaps than any Jedi I have ever seen. Although he is not very adept at manipulating it, that could be changed with sufficient training. At the moment his sense does him in good stead with fighting and negotiations, being able to sense what those around him are feeling." She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I believe he could manipulate the minds of others after enough years of training, if he could break through what seems to be a barrier around his thoughts. An natural shield if you will."

"Good or bad is your estimation?" Yoda asked.

"I conclude, that he could be a great Jedi Knight, if he has a good teacher with him." She said softly.

Yoda nodded mutely, over the days that Drayn had been gone, he had realized that his place wasn't teaching another apprentice, but with the council.

"Ready are you to teach the boy?" he asked.

Ciela looked at him through narrowed eyes, what did he mean by that?

"Yes." She said simply.

Yoda nodded and reviewed the contents of the message in his hand, the vote had been unanimous.

"Then bestow upon you the title of Jedi Master the council does." He looked at her, to detect any hint of eagerness or doubt. Her features were still calm but she asked a question, which seemed to delight her.

"Drayn's training is complete at the temple, is it not, Master Yoda?" she saw him think about his next words, and he nodded mutely, she knew that HE knew, what she was going to ask. He seemed to know a lot, he also seemed to look into her mind.

"Then I take Drayn Hywel as my Padawan Learner." She said, allow a tight smile to place itself on her features.

"Drayn?" Drayn turned away from gazing at the ship in front of him and looked at his Master, his new Master. She smiled at him comfortingly, and he fought an urge to smile himself.

"Now Drayn," Ciela said, turning serious. "As a Padawan you must watch my actions and do what I do. Follow my lead and be mindful, you will learn how to act to those around you, and you will learn things you never dreamed of. Remember, your focus determines your reality." She looked at him her eyes wide. "You will be a Jedi Knight, I promise you."

Drayn nodded calmly, "Yes Master."

"Go into the ship, I will be there shortly." She watched as Drayn took his small bundle and walked into the ship, gazing at it's contours and contents wonderingly. He had much to learn. But she would be sure to teach him as well as she could and treat him as a student and a friend.

She knew that Drayn had said his good-byes to Master Yoda earlier in the morning, she didn't what was said, but she knew that throughout the exchange Drayn had kept calm and serious, taking what the Master said to heart. Now Drayn would begin anew, but as she knew well enough from her own experience, every new beginning was another beginning's end.

"I'll watch over him Master Yoda, I promise." She said to herself quietly. She looked back around her once again, taking in the temple of Voshir. It would be abandoned now that the students had all taken Masters. The Council had decided to only have the temple on Coruscant for now, choosing to keep the temples off world without students. She saw the large ships taking out all the equipment left in the temple,

and the other students walking with masters of there own into their respective ships. She sighed, she had no doubt that this, for her and her apprentice, was indeed a new beginning.

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A list of further stories that are in the works:

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_Art of the deal: _the adventures of Delq Sular

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The Living Force, Fight for Freedom: The adventures of Kiirin
Hin

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_Untitled: _The adventures of Drayn Hywel & Ceila Rism

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_Scars of War: _The adventures of *Janok Sout

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*subject to change

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End
file.